Beyond the causative continuum

Rik De Busser
Research Centre for Linguistic Typology
rdbusser@gmail.com

RCLT
Research Centre for
Linguistic
Typology

Introduction

- We take the concept of causatives for granted
- Inspired by a problem in the analysis of Bunun
- Additional data from Dutch
- A new model of agency and causation
- Methodological consequences

Stating the problem

- In many languages, causatives seem to be a useful theoretical construct to explain certain grammatical phenomena
- We more or less know what they are doing: they express causation
- So what's the problem?

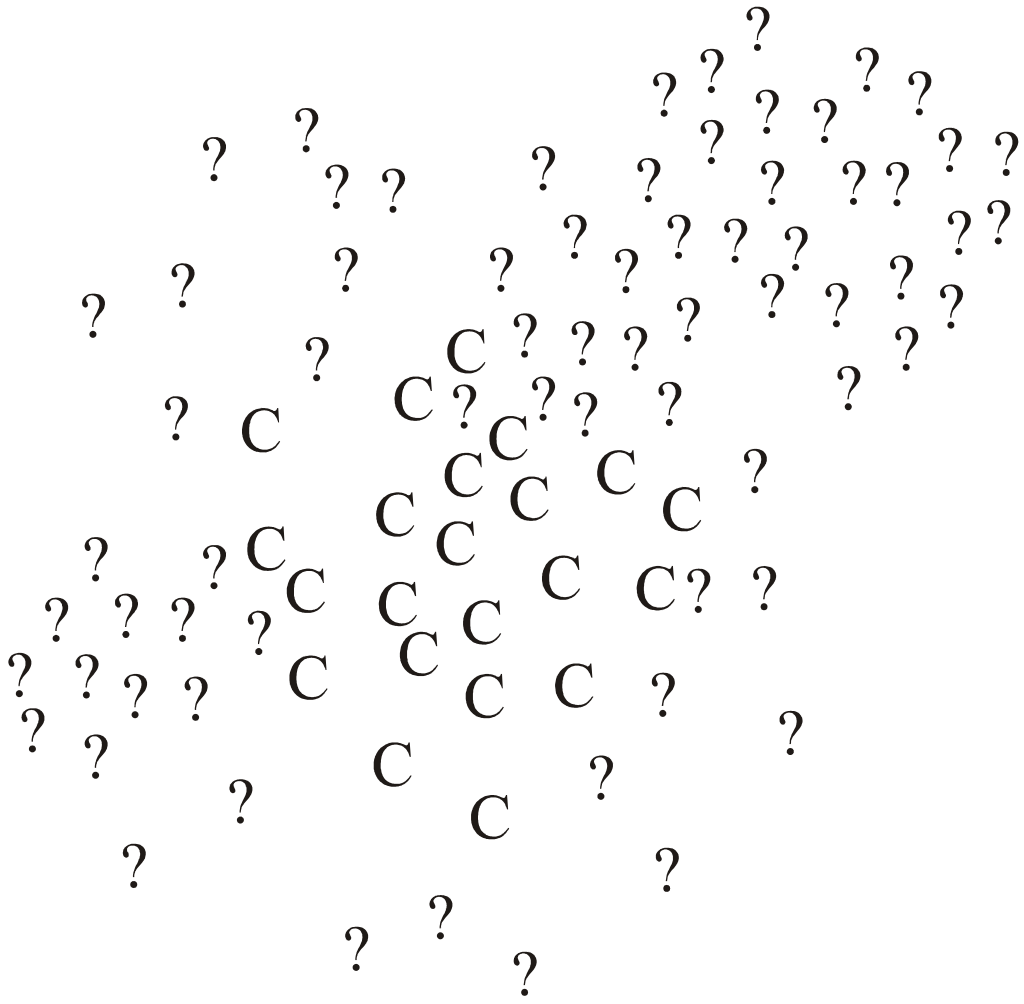
Stating the problem

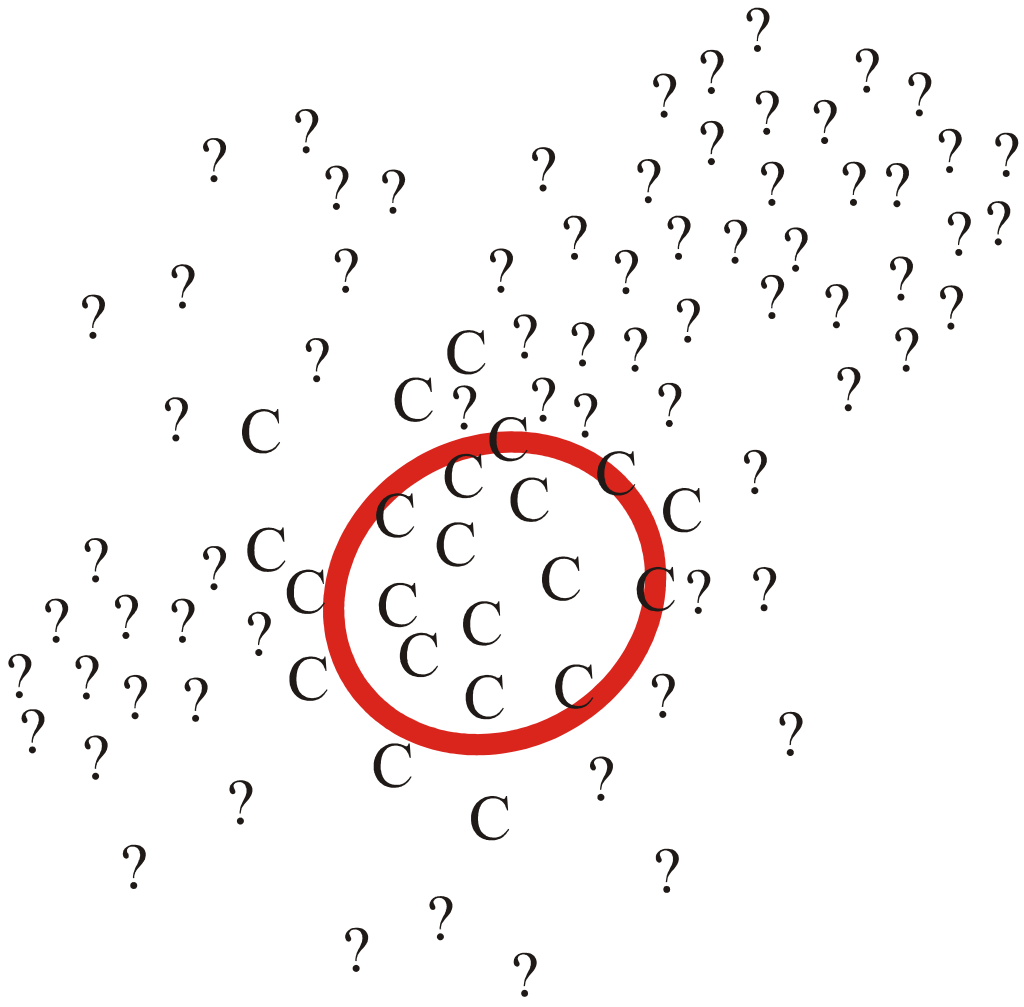
"… a causative construction involves the specification of an additional argument, a causer, onto a basic clause. A causer refers to someone or something (which can be an event or state) that initiates or controls the activity."

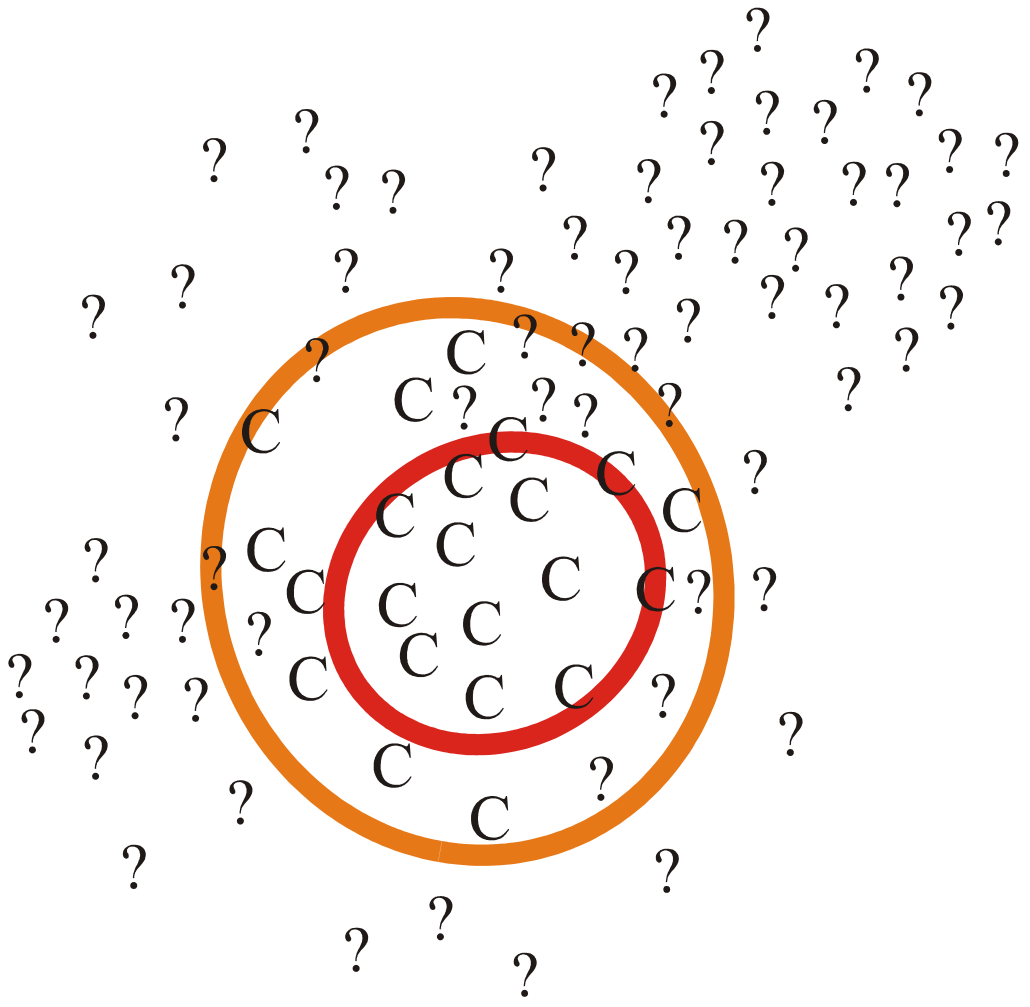
Dixon (2000: 30)

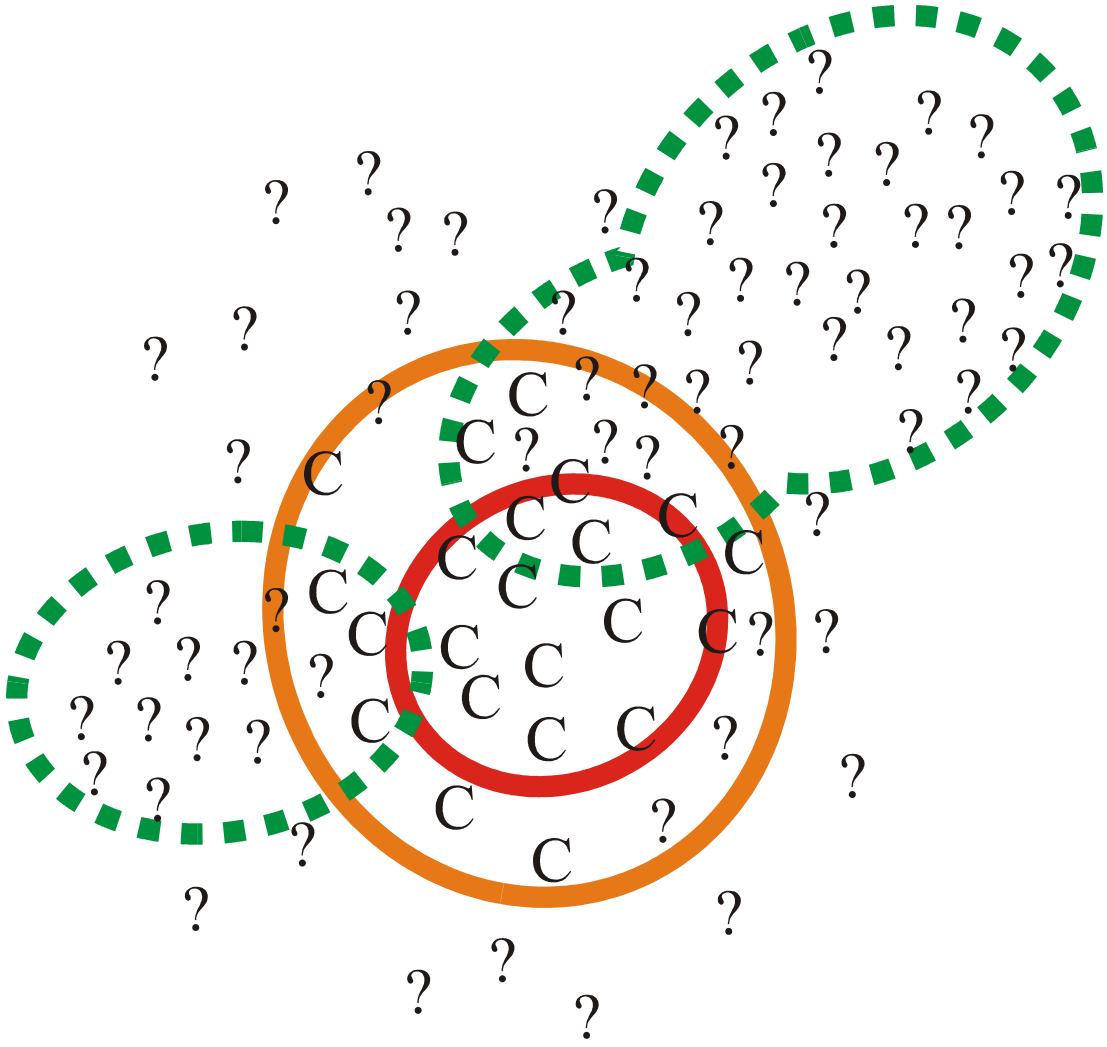
Stating the problem

- Structural notion of causatives:
  1. Causatives are seen in the first place as morphosyntactic phenomena.
  2. Causatives require the introduction of an argument.
  3. Causatives are central to the description of valency-changing derivations.









Stating the problem

"Causatives are grammatical mechanisms that are used to express causation, i.e. they express that in addition to the main participants of the event, an additional participant, the Causer, is relevant, which is not the main Agent of the event, but somehow causes it."

Me

Stating the problem

"**causative (CAUS).** (Construction, verb, affix) used in saying who or what causes something to happen."

Matthews (2005: 49)

Takivatan Bunun

- Austronesian, Taiwan
- Bunun: ± 50,000 ethnic members
- Takivatan dialect: < 1700 speakers
- ± 3 hours of transcribed and interlinearised text + elicited data

Takivatan Bunun

- A number of verbal prefixes have two or three variants:
  - Neutral variant: typically *m-*
  - Causative variant: initial *p-*
  - Associative variant: *k-*

Takivatan Bunun

	Type	Neutral (N)	Causative (C)	Associative (A)
Locative	Allative (ALL)	*mun-*	*pun-*	*(kun-)*
	Allative (ALL)	*mu-*	*pu-*	*ku-*
	Ablative (ABL)	*maisna-*	*paisna-*	—
	etc.			
Event type	Dynamic (DYN)	*ma-*	*pa-*	*ka-*
	Stative (STAT)	*ma- / mi-*	*pi-*	*ka-/(ki-)*
	Inchoative (BECOME)	*min-*	*pin-*	*kin-*
Participant orientation	Instrumental (INSTR)	*is-*	*pis-*	*(kis-)*
	Beneficiary (BEN)	*ki-*	—	—
	Resultative object (RES.OBJ)	*sin-*	*(pin-)*	—

Takivatan Bunun

- Neutral variant:

(1) **ma**-suað maduq
DYN-grow millet

‘[They] grew millet’ (TVN-012-002:7)

Takivatan Bunun

- **Causative variant**: some sort of external causation is implied

(2) pi-sihal-un **pa**-luŋku
CAUS.STAT-good-UF **CAUS.DYN**-sit

‘You have to be good to him and give him a seat’
(lit: ‘[He] has to be good-ed and made to sit down’
(adapted from TVN-013-001:15)

Takivatan Bunun

- **Associative variant**: the agent is not the only agentive force performing the event

(3) **ka**-lumaq naipa
ASSOC.DYN-home DEM.S.DIST.NVIS

'He went home' [lit: 'That one went home to be together with his family']
(adapted from TVN-012-001:119)

Takivatan Bunun

- **Problem 1**: causatives do not always behave as they are supposed to.
  - They almost never trigger explicit expression of a Causer.

(4) {**pu**-saupa-ta} [muʔu]
CAUS.ALL-direction-DEF.REF.DIST 2P.N

'They sent you to that place' [lit: '(sb) made you go in the direction (of that place)'] (TVN-012-002:48)

Takivatan Bunun

- **Problem 1**: causatives do not always behave as they are supposed to.
  - … actually, this is only possible when the verb does not have agent-cross-referencing

(5) na {**pun**-han-**un**} [**ðaku**] [aipi]
thus **CAUS.ALL**-go-**UF** **1S.N** DEM.PROX

[Kuhku-ta] {pa-tas?i-un}
GeoName-DEF.REF.PROX CAUS.DYN-make-UF

'… I will take it to Rui-Sui to have it fixed.' (TVN-xx2-004)

Takivatan Bunun

- **Problem 1**: causatives do not always behave as they are supposed to.
  - It is not clear that they cause demotion of the original agent.

Takivatan Bunun

- **Problem 2**: there is a tripartite alternation in prefixes that is best analysed as a paradigmatic opposition.

ma- /	pa- /	ka-
neutral	causative	associative

But a paradigm of what?

Takivatan Bunun

- **Control:**
  - Neutral *m*-forms:

    Agent = Controller
  - Causative *p*-forms:

    Causer = Controller
  - Associative *k*-forms:

    Agent + X = Controller

Dutch

- Indo-European, West-Germanic
- 21.7 million native speakers
- Corpus of Spoken Dutch (CGN), ± 9,900,000 words
- Examples from Dutch spoken in Flanders, Belgium
- Extracted with directed search queries

Dutch

- Accepted picture: two causative verbs
  - *doen* ‘do’: direct causation
  - *laten* ‘let’: indirect causation

    [Coppen et al. (2007), Verhagen & Kemmer (1997)]
- Fits into the traditional dichotomy: direct vs. indirect causation

Dutch

- Direct causation with *doen* ‘do’

(6) de stralen-de zon **doe-t** de temperatuur oplop-en
the shine-ADJR sun do.PRES-3S the temperature rise-INF

‘The bright sun **makes** the temperature rise.’ (V&K)

  - Causer has a tendency to be inanimate (58%)

Dutch

- Indirect causation with *laten* ‘let’

(7)	de	sergeant	**liet**	ons	door	de	modder	kruip-en
	the	sergeant	let.PST	us.ACC	through	the	mud	crawl-INF

‘The sergeant **had/made** us crawl through the mud.’ (V&K)

  - Causer is typically animate (99%)

Dutch

- **Problem 1**: There at least four causative verbs in Dutch:
  - *Laten* ‘let’
  - *Doen* ‘do’
  - *Maken* ‘make’
  - *Geven* ‘give’
- Verhagen & Kemmer (1997) seem to focus on *doen* and *laten* because they allow for constructions with bare infinitives.

Dutch

- *Maken* ‘make’

1. CSR causes CSE to be in a certain STATE

$[CSR]_{NP\text{-}Nom}$ + maken + $[CSE]_{NP\text{-}Acc}$ + $[STATE]_{AdjP}$

(8)

hij	maakte	me	nerveus
3S.NOM	make-PST.S	1S.ACC	nervous

‘He made me nervous’ (fv800876)

Dutch

- *Geven* ‘give’

1. CSR give PAT to AG to cause AG to ACT onto PAT

$[\text{CSR}]_{\text{NP-Nom}}$ + geven + $[\text{AG}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$ + $[\text{PAT}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$ + te + $[\text{ACT}]_{\text{VP-trans}}$

(11)	Ø	geef	me	gras	te	eten.
		give	1S.NOM	grass	PRT	eat-INF
	CSR	CAUSE	AG	PAT		ACT

‘… make me eat grass.’ (fv800618)

Dutch

- *Geven* ‘give’

2. AG give PAT to BEN in order to ACT

$[AG]_{NP\text{-}Nom}$ + geven + $[BEN]_{NP\text{-}Acc}$ + $[PAT]_{NP\text{-}Acc}$ + om te + $[ACT]_{Predicate}$

(13)	geef	me	nog	'ns	teksten	om	te	lezen
	give	1S.ACC	yet	PRT	text-PL	in.order.to	PRT	read-INF

‘… give me some other texts to read.’ (fv400243)

Dutch

- *Geven* ‘give’

2. CSR give AG the gift to ACT (on PAT)

$[\text{CSR}]_{\text{NP-Nom}}$ + geven + $[\text{het}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$ + $[\text{AG}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$ + te + $[\text{ACT}]_{\text{VP-trans}}$

(15)	...,	geef	het	ons	te	wandelen	in	Uw	Geest
		give	3S.N	1P.ACC	PRT	walk-INF	in	2S.POSS	spirit

‘[…] let us walk in Your Spirit.’ (internet)

Dutch

- **Problem 2**: in particular *laten* ‘let’ en *doen* ‘do’ have a variety of functions
  - Some of these can be classified as causatives; others cannot.
  - There are areas of ambiguity, where one usage cannot be clearly distinguished from another.

Dutch

- **Laten**(1): indirect causation

  CSR cause CSE ACT (onto PAT)

  $[CSR]_{NP\text{-}Nom}$ + laten + $[CSE]_{NP\text{-}Acc}$

  (+ $[PAT]_{NP\text{-}Acc}$) + $[ACT]_{Pred}$

(16)	ik	laat	hen	iets	voorbereid-en
	1S.NOM	let	3S.ACC	something	prepare-INF
	CSR	CAUSE	CSE	PAT	ACT

'I ask/demand them to them prepare something' (fv400152)

Dutch

- **Laten**(2): Permissive causation

  ALLOWER permit AG to ACT (onto PAT)

  $[\text{ALLOWER}]_{\text{NP-Nom}}$ + laten + $[\text{AG}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$

  (+ $[\text{PAT}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$) + $[\text{ACT}]_{\text{VP-trans}}$

(17) in 's hemelsnaam waarom laten ze die
for.God's.sake why let-PL 3P.NOM those.P

geestelijk-en niet huw-en?
clergyman-PL not marry-INF

'For God's sake, why don't they allow these clergymen to marry?' (fv400458)

Dutch

- **Laten**$^{(3)}$: Do not hinder the continuation of an existing state

  ALLOWER cause PAT to remain STATE

  $[\text{ALLOWER}]_{\text{NP-Nom}}$ + laten + $[\text{PAT}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$

  + $[\text{STATE}]_{\text{VP-intrans}}$

(18) ze lat-en die daar zitt-en precies hé.
3P.NOM let-INF that.one there sit-INF just INTER
'Apparently, they just leave that one over there.'
[lit: '… just let that one sit there.' (fv700078)

Dutch

- **Laten**(4): Hortative

  let us ACT

  $[\text{1st pers}]_{\text{NP-Nom}}$ + laten + $[\text{1st pers}]_{\text{NP-Acc}}$ + $[\text{ACT}]_{\text{Pred}}$

(19)	lat-en	we	ons	tot	de	zaak	bepal-en
	let-PL	1P.NOM	1P.ACC	till	the	case	fix

'Let's focus on the case at hand.' (fv800562)

Intermediate conclusion

- Causatives are more complex phenomena than we first thought
- Bunun morphological causatives are part of a ternary opposition that has paradigmatic properties
- Dutch periphrastic causatives have various functions and forms, and are connected to phenomena that are functionally and formally related but should probably not be classified as causatives.

A tentative solution

- Modularity
  - **Methodological tool:**
    If a complex system is too difficult to analyse in its entirety, take it apart into meaningful subsystems
  - **Theoretical principle:**
    Some/many complex grammatical concepts are epiphenomenal: they consist of a number of interacting subsystems

A tentative solution

- Control

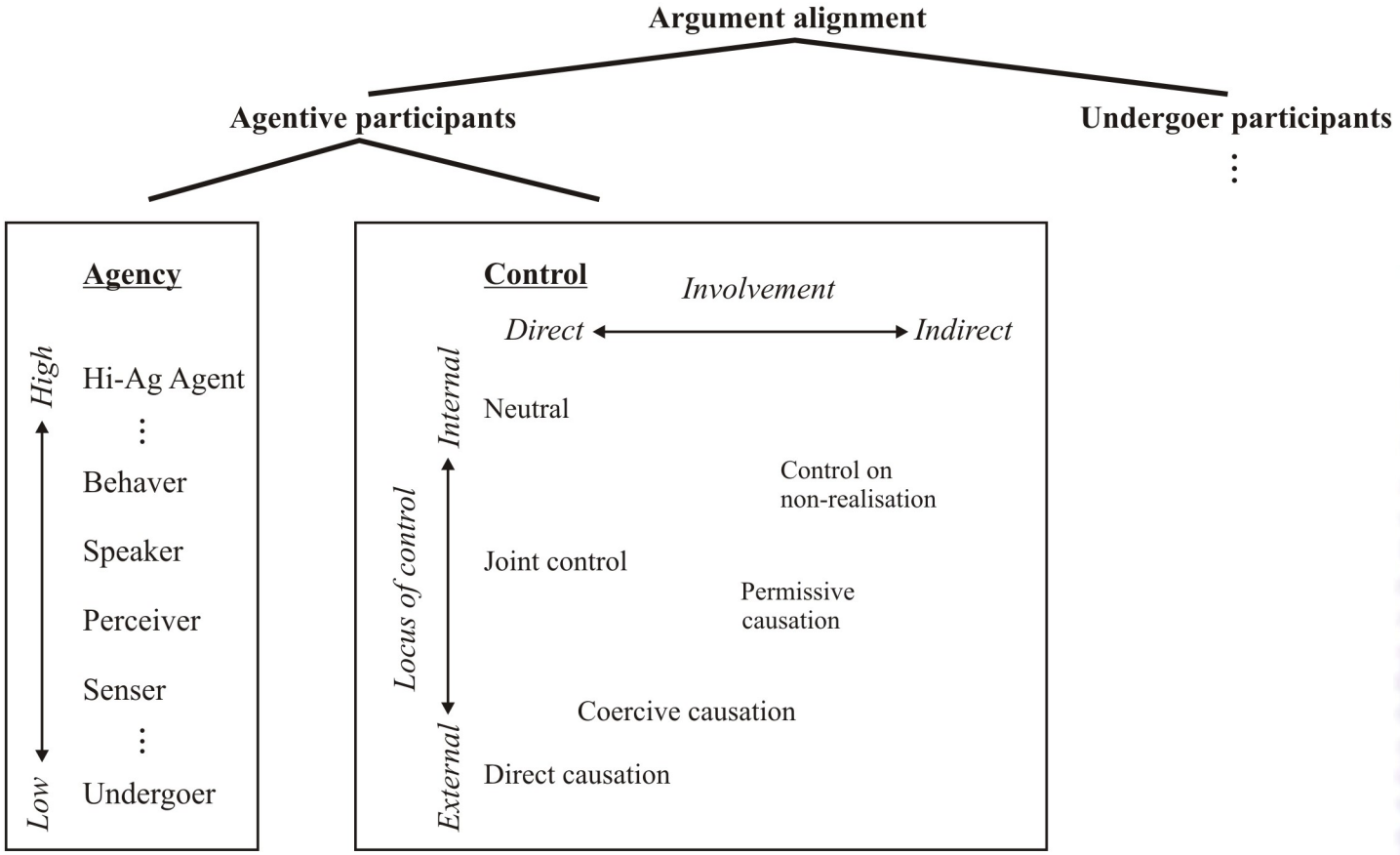
"A causer refers to someone or something (which can be an event or state) that initiates or **controls the activity**. This is the **defining property of the syntactic–semantic function A** (transitive subject)."

(Dixon 2000: 30)

A tentative solution

- Control
  - What is Control were a functional category on par with Agency, rather than a property of Agency?
  - Agentivity = Agency + Control

A tentative solution



A tentative solution

- Control
  - Control would determine:
    - the conflation or separation of Agent and Controller
    - the degree of involvement the Controller has in the controlled event
  - Causation would be one possible manifestation of Control, i.e. situation where the Controller:
    - is maximally distinct from the Agent
    - exerts a high level of control

A tentative solution

- Control
  - The traditional concept of Agency (which I here have called Agentivity) would become epiphenomenal: it would be the artefact of an interaction of (at least) two subsystems.

A tentative solution

- Control
  - In Bunun, the locus of control is of main importance

Neutral *m*-forms: internal control

Agent = Controller

Causative *p*-forms: external control

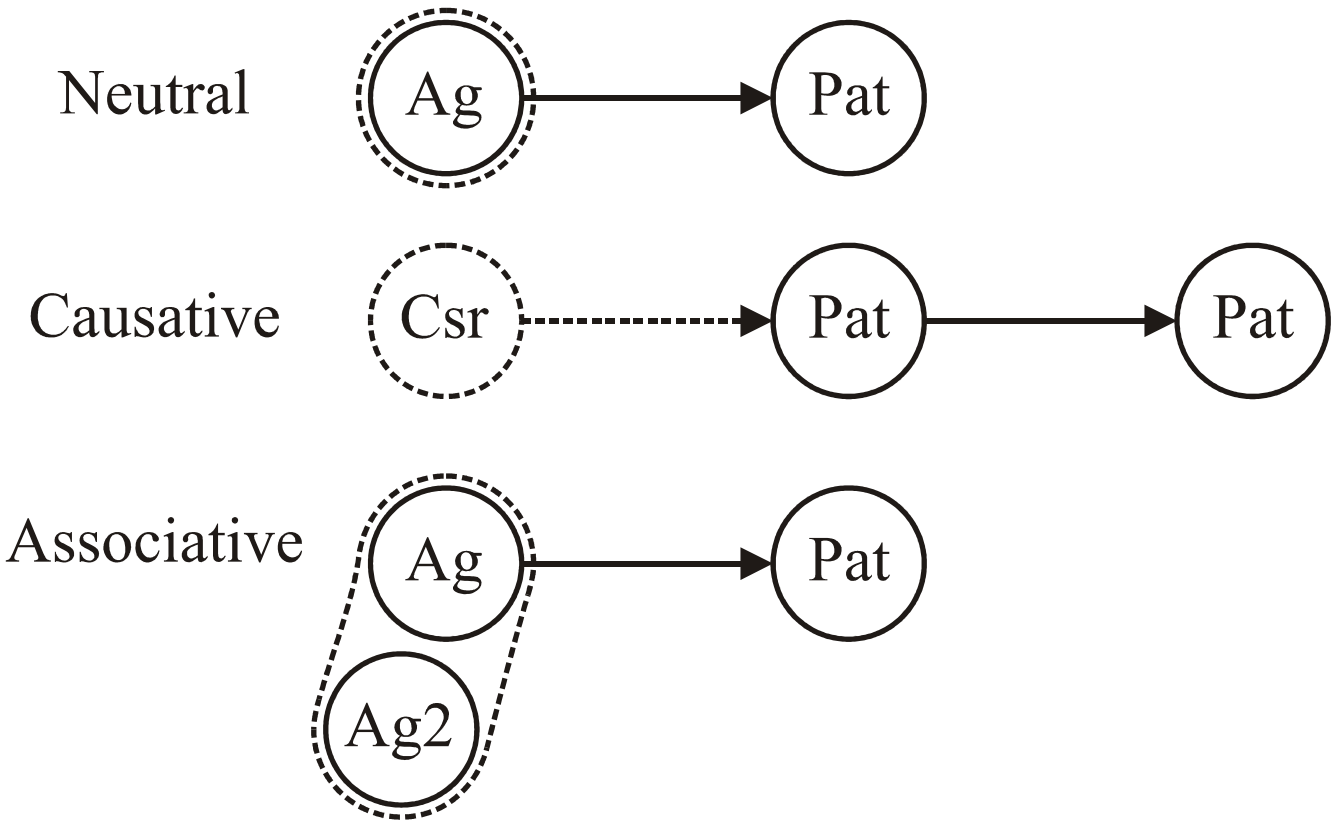
Causer = Controller

Associative *k*-forms: joint control

Agent + X = Controller

A tentative solution

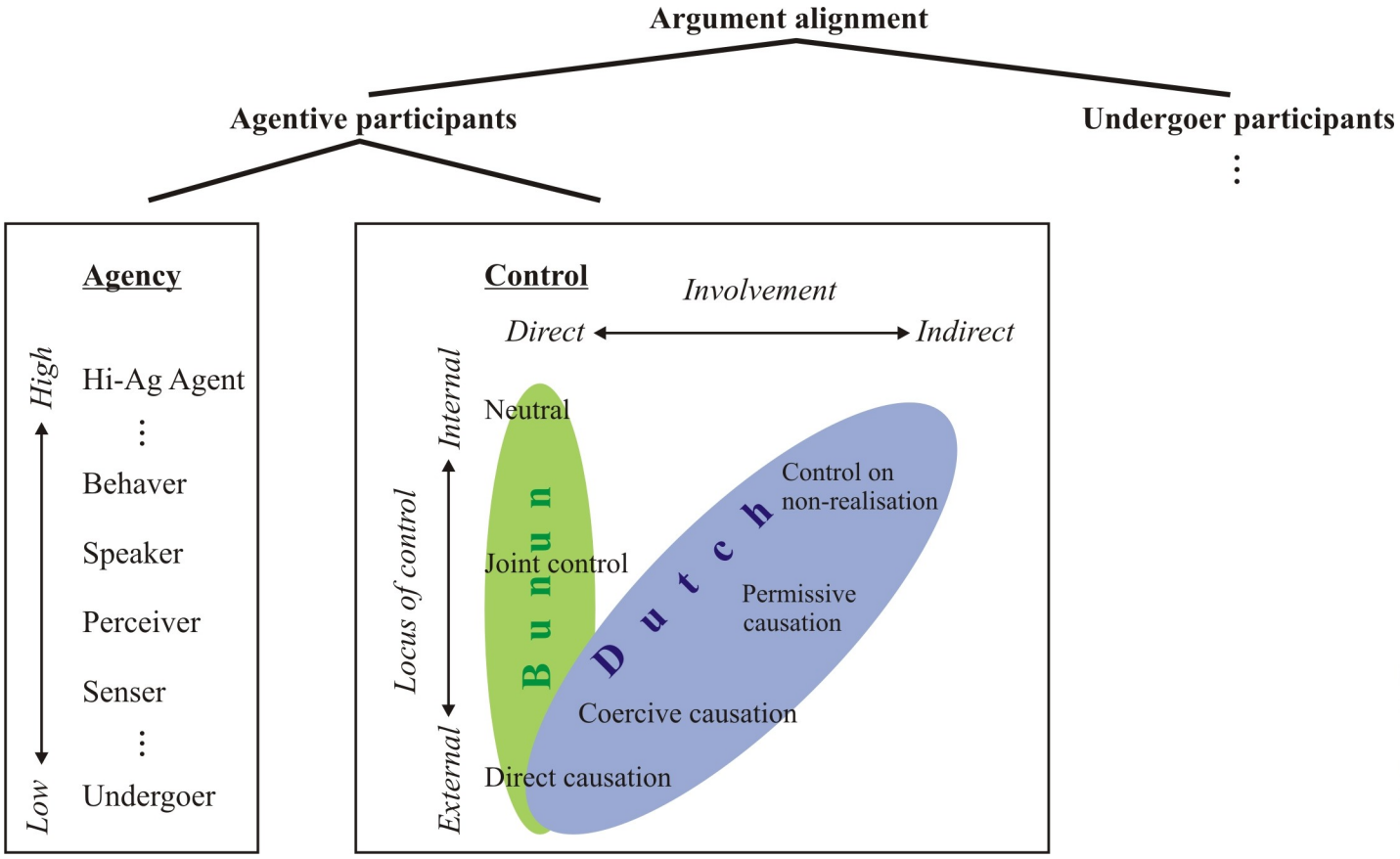
- Control



A tentative solution

- Control
  - For Dutch causative constructions, locus and involvement of Control are both relevant parameters

A tentative solution



A tentative solution

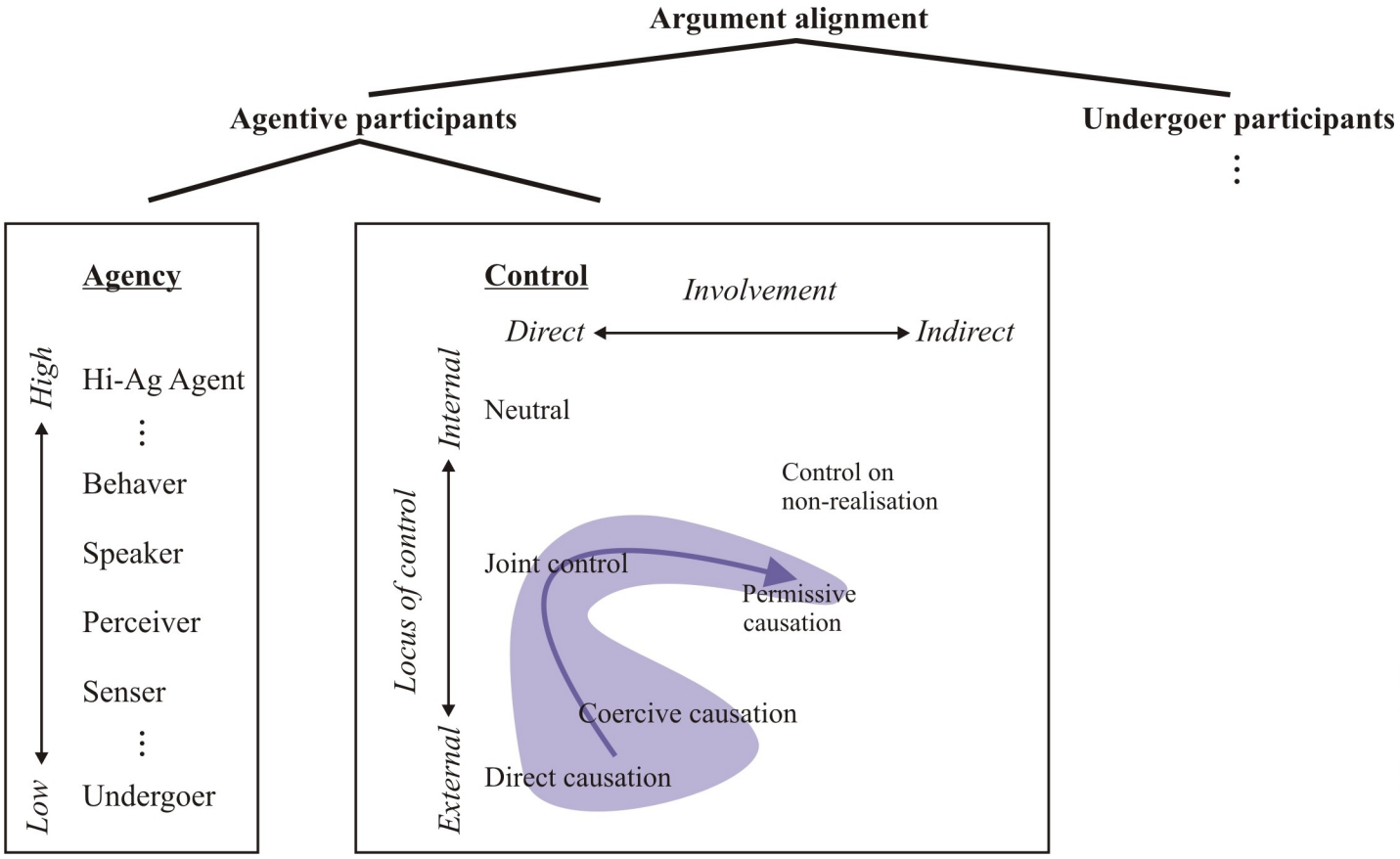
- The causative continuum

  direct —— sociative —— indirect

  (Shibatani & Pardeshi 2002)

  – Causation is not just a direct-indirect contrast
  – There is a link between verb classes and causation

A tentative solution



A tentative solution

- The extended continuum
  - The model here presented extends/unfolds the CC in more dimensions
  - At the moment, it lacks a clear link between function and form
  - Next step: interaction between modules

Conclusion

- Causatives are complicated
  - Structural and functional variation
  - Interrelations with similar phenomena
- Any narrow view on causatives blocks out many of these phenomena
- Modularity is a way to integrate these complexities in our linguistic description

Conclusion

- Agentivity might be epiphenomenal
- Control as a full-fledged functional category rather than a property of Agency
- Causation can then be explained as a manifestation of Control where:
  - Agent and Controller are maximally distinct
  - The involvement of the Controller is high

Bibliography

Comrie, Bernard. 1976. The syntax of causative constructions: Cross-language similarities and divergences. In Masayoshi Shibatani (Ed.), *The Grammar of Causative Constructions*, p. 261-312. New York: Academic Press.

Coppen, P.A., Walter Haeseryn & F. de Vriend. 2007. Elektronische ANS (Versie 1.2). Available at, retrieved on 29 November 2010.

De Busser, Rik. 2009. *Towards a Grammar of Takivatan: Selected Topics*. PhD dissertation at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

De Busser, Rik. 2010. *Towards a modular analysis of argument alignment in Takivatan Bunun*, article submitted to Studies in Language.

Dixon, R.M.W. 2000. A typology of causatives: Form, syntax and meaning. In R.M.W. Dixon & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (Eds.), *Changing Valency: Case studies in Transitivity*, p. 30-83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matthews, Peter H. 2005. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shibatani, Masayoshi & Prashant Pardeshi. 2002. The causative continuum. In Masayoshi Shibatani (Ed.), *The Grammar of Causation and Interpersonal Manipulation*, p. 85-126. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Verhagen, Arie & Suzanne Kemmer. 1997. Interaction and causation: Causative constructions in modern standard Dutch, *Journal of Pragmatics* 27 (1), 61-82.

Uninang miqumisang!

Dank u voor uw aandacht!